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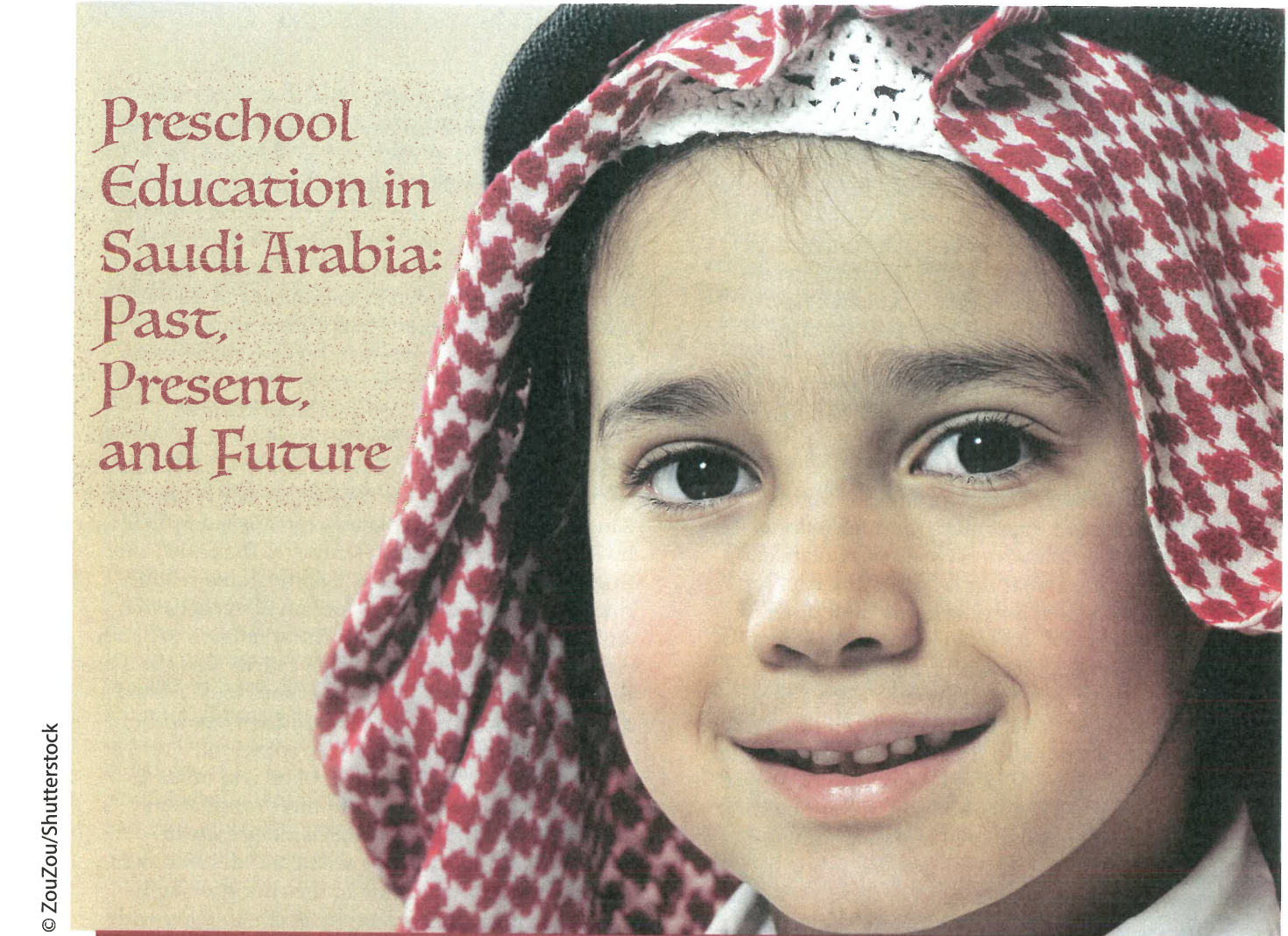


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Preschool Education in Saudi Arabia: Past, Present, and Future

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Despite differences in specific teaching styles, nations around the world are united in the belief that early education is essential for preparing children for success throughout their school life and beyond. This tenet is as applicable to the Saudi Arabian early childhood education (ECE) system as it is anywhere else. Yet, little is actually known about preschool in Saudi Arabia, especially beyond the Arabic-speaking world. How might the Saudi system be similar or different from the ECE systems of other countries? How might social, cultural, and economic factors uniquely influence preschools in the Kingdom? Specifically, how might the teachings of Islam, an integral aspect of Saudi culture, be integrated into ECE? And what are the future possibilities for this system, which has experienced so much growth in the last 50 years? Drawing on articles and books on the modern preschool situation in Saudi Arabia, translated from Arabic to English by the first author, this article presents an overview of one of the world's most rapidly growing early childhood education systems.

By Haifa Hassan Aljabreen and Martha Lash

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International television and other media, books, the internet, and scholarly sources flood the educational environment of the Middle East with images of preschool in Western nations. This information is available for any audience, from the housewife to the university professor. It is common in Gulf countries to see U.S. early childhood education explained and demonstrated in illustration of “best practice” or as strong educational options. But the reverse is almost non-existent: very little information is available about Middle Eastern early childhood education (ECE) school and culture for the rest of the world to consider.

What importance do descriptions of Middle Eastern ECE hold importance for international education? Comparative education scholars and researchers affirm that the study of any country’s systems can benefit the development of other nations’ education (Al-Mogbel, 2014; Al-Shayji, 2013; Phillips & Schweisfurth, 2008). Arabic early childhood education appears to be a timely topic to share with the broader early childhood education community. Of particular importance in any understanding of an educational system or its specific curriculum is the concept of multicultural awareness and international understanding of theory and human development, including at the individual level of the teacher (Rogoff, 2013). Considering the modern world’s technological, environmental, and economic changes, Al-Mogbel (2014) writes, “These changes influence modifications and give rise to new concerns for pre-primary education, thus necessitating the need to access various international experiences in this field” (p. 2072). Thus, we can benefit from exploring preschool education in Saudi Arabia beyond the broad and outdated overviews.

How can scholars, educators, or interested students examine a distant culture? How is a full description of preschool in a Middle Eastern nation, Saudi Arabia, made available to a Western learner, showing an honest and complete picture of modern ECE in that place? Most of the sources describing Saudi ECE are in Arabic. This article draws on those Arabic texts primarily, with some relevant research from English-text journals, and seeks to present a complete and accurate picture of Saudi Arabian preschool education for both Eastern and Western readers. Before delving into Saudi ECE history, current policies and practices, and future possibilities, we present an overview of Saudi Arabia, a nation that continues to develop. We share the history and culture of Saudi Arabia, which infuses all of the country’s infrastructure.

Overview of Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has the largest land area of all Arab states in Western Asia and the second largest in the Arab world after Algeria. It is bordered by Jordan and Iraq to the north; Kuwait to the northeast; Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, and the Persian Gulf to the east; Oman to the southeast; Yemen in the south; and the Red Sea to the west. The terrain is varied, including grasslands, forests, mountain ranges, and barren desert lands (Information Office, 2015). The Saudi Arabian Government Central Department of Statistics and Information (2014) calculated the total country’s population in 2014 to be 30,770,375, and over 4 million live in the capital city of Riyadh. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was established in 1932 by King Abdul-Aziz (also known as Ibn Saud) after three decades of war; today, Saudi Arabia is still ruled by members of this same royal dynasty, the Al-Saud family. Islam is the official religion of Saudi Arabia, and the country is often called “The Land of the Two Holy Mosques,” in reference to Al-Masjid al-Haram in Mecca, and Al-Masjid al-Nabawi in Medina. Economically, Saudi Arabia is the world’s largest producer and exporter of oil and holds 25% of the world’s known oil supplies (Information Office, 2015). This significant economic world position has led to much growth and development in Saudi Arabia, including in the education arena. The education transformation, in conjunction with the current Kingdom’s rule and global economic role, resulted in a change from only the wealthy having access to formal education to expansion to more of the population. The nation currently has over 50 (public and private) universities, and over 30,000 schools providing free education for its citizens. Education in the early years is coeducational with female teachers; beginning in the primary years, education is gender-based with same-gender teachers. Islam remains at the core of a Saudi education (Al Sadaawi, 2010) and is integral to be consistent with cultural beliefs. Seventy-five years ago, Saudi Arabia as a nation did not exist, and some consider its major challenge amid such sophisticated growth to be achieving modernity without compromising its heritage, faith, or culture (Information Office, 2015).

Education in the Kingdom: Value of Children

The Saudi Arabian government now directly connects the education of children to Saudi advancement and development (Al-Shaer, 2008). In the common tradition of education, Saudis believe that careful child care and education in the early years promises success for the future of

the entire nation. In the contemporary world, the importance of preschool opportunities cannot be ignored. Saudis consider children to be the wealth of society and the decision makers of tomorrow. The ultimate value of a nation, therefore, depends on the preparation of its children, whose growth is directly related to their educational environment (Al-Shaer, 2008). "The school has an undeniably important function in providing a comprehensive scientific and practical education to the younger generation in the areas of doctrine and worship, ethics, individual and social rights and duties, self-development . . . and the physical body" (Al-Shaer, 2008, p. 4). Preschool and kindergarten years are crucial times for building a child's personality, independence, and ability to cooperate with peers.

Preschool Education in Saudi Arabia

This geographic, economic, religious, and historical context and educational foundational thinking has guided the development of Saudi ECE over the last 40 years. Investment in the educational strength of Saudi citizens was a significant focus of the late King Abdullah Al-Saud and his Council of Ministers. Saudi Arabian educational literature provides much information about the details of Saudi ECE and the present development of the Saudi preschool system. (Since this literature exists entirely in Arabic, the concepts and explanations included in the analyzed articles and books were translated into English by the first author, for the purposes of writing this overview of the modern preschool situation in Saudi Arabia.) This synopsis of Saudi ECE addresses the following areas: history of preschool education, accelerated curriculum change from Ktatib approach to recognized preschool approach, current curriculum goals and objectives, preschool teacher preparation, challenges in modern preschool education, the future of Saudi ECE, and implications.

History of Preschool Education

In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, "nursery" is the designated term for optional child care for the youngest children, ages 0-3; it focuses more on care and less on teaching. "Preschool" or "kindergarten," also optional, indicates care and instruction for children ages 3-5, those who are not yet admitted to grade 1. This article focuses on Saudi preschool education. Boys and girls attend preschool classes together, and all teachers are female. (This is in contrast with elementary, intermediate, and high school classes, where male students study with male teachers in their own buildings, and female students study with female

teachers [Sedgwick, 2001].) The school day often begins before 7:00 a.m. and concludes at 1:00 p.m.

In the earliest days of Saudi education, Saudi teachers used an Arabic method called Ktatib, a word meaning the gathering of a group of young people at a mosque to be taught not only religious instruction from the Qur'an, but also Arabic reading and writing and moral habits for good behavior (Abduljawad, Alkhatib, Alsenbl, & Metwally, 2008; Fernea, 2014). Ktatib methods of teaching were traditional. Instructors stood while students sat on the floor and repeated information written on a small board. The methods were basic, but the information drilled into Muslim children in this Qur'anic context was "deemed necessary for a child's religious development" (Fernea, 2014, p. 9).

Several of Saudi Arabia's leaders during those early years of development realized the need for preschool children to be included in a more structured educational learning situation. Their concern that the Ktatib methods were informal and insufficient led to the creation of the Kingdom's first official preschools. Abduljawad et al. (2008) detail the progression of the modern Saudi public school for the youngest children. The first non-Ktatib preschool opened in 1966 in Riyadh. Two more opened the following year in Dammam and Ahsa. In 1975, more opened in Mecca (Alhamed, Alotaibi, Ziadah, & Metwally, 2007). These first years showed slow but successful development.

Theoretical influences during this early time of growth included both Western and Eastern scholarship in the area of ECE. According to Abduljawad et al. (2008), it is crucial for Middle Eastern educational culture to acknowledge and value various contributions of Muslim scholars. Islamic thinkers al-Ghazali, Ibn al-Qayyim, Ibn Tufail, Ibn Sina, and Ibn Sahnoun emphasized the importance of education for the young child (Abduljawad et al., 2008). The holy Qur'an, along with the sayings of the Prophet Mohammed, is also considered a main source for Saudi education (Sedgwick, 2001), focusing on the significance of this early stage and its role in human development. Mohammed's teachings speak to "children's rights for care and education, . . . that children should be listened to and their questions should be answered" (Khalifa, 2001, p. 32). In general, "Islamic history sets a good example in relation to treating children with love and care" (Khalifa, 2001, p. 33). Perhaps the most significant point made by these educators, psychologists, religious leaders, the Qur'an, and researchers is that the child, especially at the preschool stage, has great potential for enthusiasm, imagination, and activity (Abduljawad et al., 2008).

Abduljawad et al. (2008) also acknowledge prominent Western educators who have contributed to Saudi ECE philosophies: Froebel, Montessori, Freud, Erickson, and Russell. They noted Erikson's significant contributions in clarifying the human development dimensions in the early years. Two of the more well-known Western researchers who have informed Saudi progress are Dewey and Piaget. Particularly, Piaget's principles of child psychology and children's stages of growth, including the child's cognitive development, have contributed to Saudi ECE philosophy.

Saudi education also operates on the belief that the sphere of early childhood education is complex: learning happens in multiple environments, which work together to develop the child. As in other countries, Saudi children traditionally receive education and care from multiple sources: formal schooling, home, community, and teachers personally reaching out to children (Prokop, 2003). The school, the home, and society teach skills that enable the child to build his/her character, but the specific environment of the preschool holds a prominent role in nurturing, providing leisure times, and developing children's spirit of exploration. "The importance of pre-primary education lies in its being the foundational stage for all other stages, wherein the ability to learn, to control movement, to control thoughts, to express emotions and to adjust socially are the basis for future education" (Al-Mogbel, 2014, p. 2084). During this period of growth, children start becoming interested in things that are vital to them, such as structured play; beginning reading, writing, and arithmetic; learning individual and collective action; and exposure to the educational activities of primary school. Alnashef (2003) explains the benefit for child development when children are exposed to a consistent preschool curriculum and environment. Part of the significance of early development is its implications for a child's future (Al-Mogbel, 2014). Elnaklawy (1986) points to research showing that what happens to the child before entering elementary school significantly affects the ability to grow and progress in later years of school. According to a 2008 report from the Commission to Build a Healthier America, increases in results on I.Q. tests for elementary and teenage students are linked to skills they developed and experiences they had in early childhood programs (Braveman, Sadeh-Nobari, & Egerter, 2008).

The increased attention to caring for and preparing the whole child—for school, for careers, and for his/her life journey—reflects research on

the great importance of the early years of human life. ECE develops the core of an individual's personality. It affects development, inclinations, aptitudes, and abilities (Elnaklawy, 1986).

Accelerated Curriculum Change From Ktatib Approach to Recognized Preschool Approach
Preschools experienced much faster growth in the late 1970s and the remainder of the 20th century: 10 trial preschools opened in Riyadh; then, three preschools each in five key cities—Jeddah, Medina, Taif, Hofuf, and Dammam; and, then, two preschools each in Abha, Buraidah, and Arar (Abduljawad et al., 2008). Over the last 25 years, many more preschools have opened. For many Saudi citizens, a "good" preschool experience was considered a privilege of the wealthy. By 2006, however, Saudi Arabian students were enrolled in 872 preschools, located in all major urban areas (Abduljawad et al., 2008). Al-Mogbel (2014) cites huge increases in enrollment in the early years of this century, due to government efforts toward expansion and development: "The number of children enrolled in kindergartens has increased from approximately 96,000 in 2004 to 100,030,000 in 2008" (p. 2084).

Supervision and management of ECE in Saudi Arabia today is handled by a combination of three organizations: The Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Affairs, and the private sector (Abduljawad et al., 2008). The Ministry of Education is the "umbrella agency" controlling the majority of management. Within its organization, the private sector (educational management and investment by companies, private individuals, and non-government or charitable organizations) also play significant roles in education leadership. The Ministry of Social Affairs provides teams of social workers and visiting health experts to supervise preschool institutions. While in some senses it is advantageous to have private businesses and others care about education in Saudi Arabia, the involvement of these three groups is extremely challenging because multiple organizations are considered "authorities" in this situation.

A significant factor in Saudi preschool growth has been the increase of mothers working outside the home (Al-Otaibi, 1997). Elnaklawy (1986) explains that as Saudi culture has increased its recognition of male and female equality in many employment opportunities, more women now seek to work (Hamdan, 2005), either in support of the family's financial condition or because of their own interests in personal development and opportunity. Many women, however, find themselves unable



to coordinate between work and the basic duties of the home (Nahedh, 1999, cited in Al-Sunbul, Al-Khateeb, Metwali, & Nour-Deen, 1998). Today, mothers need and want places that will support their children's educational achievement, developmental and moral growth, abilities and skills, and organized outlet for energy (Hassan, 1986; Al-Otaibi, 1997).

Current Curriculum Goals and Objectives

Saudi kindergarten curriculum historically lacked coordination and was significantly underdeveloped (Kashkary & Robinson, 2006). Teachers were free to structure their own curriculum without much supervision. When the organizational structure

became more official and subject to Ministry direction in 1980, standardization increased and the curriculum developed more significantly according to child development theory and age-appropriate objectives.

Today, Saudi ECE goals resemble those of many other nations with strong education systems. Faragi (2009) details the general objectives of preschool education in Saudi Arabia (many of which are based on Ministry of Education documents from 1970): 1) to direct children in and give them the opportunity for exercise and sensory development, supporting healthy habits of activity and building strong bodies; 2) to teach children to enjoy being with, collaborating with, and sharing with other

children; 3) to care for the children's moral, mental, and physical growth; 4) to prepare the child for the elementary school environment (introducing social skills, language, age-appropriate information, and academic subjects).

Al-Shaer (2008) has explained basic Saudi ECE goals. The kindergarten/preschool experience in Saudi ECE is considered an extension of the family atmosphere and should protect children from dangers, watch for signs of abnormal behavior, and be responsive to the requirements of Islam. Social goals acknowledge the transition from family life to a social life shared with peers. Preschool should allow Saudi children to absorb the virtues of good Islamic examples through simulation and instruction in tradition, with neither indulgence nor overwork. ECE must offer a wealth of linguistic expressions that are age-appropriate. A creative and aesthetic preschool environment ought to provide children with an opportunity for vitality and healthy development (Kashkary & Robinson, 2006).

Saudi ECE programs are based on the basic principle that curriculum at the preschool level should align with these stated objectives (Kashkary & Robinson, 2006). According to Albajah (2002), curriculum has been defined as a set of planned and practiced experiences and activities that help children achieve desired educational outcomes as best as they can according to their abilities. Alnashef (2003) comments that the most important curriculum considerations for Saudi preschool are: 1) suitability for development of physical, mental, psychological, and social learning; 2) inclusion of abundant experiences and activities (especially hands-on, kinetic learning) that young children can absorb and understand; and 3) a focus on the present and future of the child. Traditional subject areas are introduced at a simple preschool level: counting and arithmetic (including currency and shapes); science (curiosity, observation, experimentation); art; physical education; health education (supporting medical records for each child); and social education (community roles, public service). Citing recent Saudi laws, Al-Mogbel (2014) confirms the Saudi commitment to advancing its ECE curriculum, noting the Ministry of Education is involved in "developing dynamic educational curricula for kindergarten to achieve the objectives of this stage" (Ministry of Education, Saudi Arabia, 2013, p. 2084).

Only two aspects of Saudi preschool curriculum differ greatly from many other curriculums for this age: 1) the integration of religious education—Islam—as the national doctrine, religion, source of ethics, and basis of the legal system (Sedgwick,

2001); and 2) study of Arabic language, including formal usage (for help in understanding the Qu'ran). Alnashef (2003) explains that the goals for the religious instruction include: enhancing faith in God and His Messenger in the hearts of preschool children, recognizing the ability of God, thanking his grace, and teaching children good moral behavior and habits. It also introduces children to the five pillars of Islam and Islamic social trends and values.

Preschool Teacher Preparation

Forty years ago, according to a statistical study by the Ministry of Education (2006), before Saudi higher education had developed significantly, the country was not involved in training its own teachers for preschools or indeed any other school level. Instead, it was common to bring teachers from neighbor countries (especially Egypt, Syria, Jordan, and Iraq) to educate Saudi children. By 2006, however, the Ministry of Education reported that 87% of preschool teachers are now Saudi citizens, and only 855 of the 4,271 early childhood teachers were hired from outside countries (as cited in Abduljawad et al., 2008). This significant change is primarily due to the development of higher education opportunities for early childhood educators, which is further evidence that preschool education is valued.

Al-Qahtani (1994) explains that the preparation of teachers and educators for nurseries and preschools was officially begun in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia by the Gulf Girl Association in 1983, an organization that provides social and cultural support for Saudi women and offers an associate degree in early childhood education. Located in Kobar, the 64-credit Gulf Girl Association teacher preparation program presents both the theory and practice of the field and two practicum phases that support this education, including significant time with a full-time teacher-mentor in a preschool (Abduljawad et al., 2008).

In 1985, two years after the creation of the Gulf Girl Association program, King Saud University began a bachelor's degree program for early childhood teachers (Al-Qahtani, 1994). As a full college degree, this program includes 165 credit hours of study, usually completed in eight semesters and including a practicum. The 165 hours include 15 general credits, 46 general education credits, and 104 specialist hours focused on early childhood. The King Saud University degree is considered to be a pilot program and has been government-supported since its beginning, including free tuition, a stipend for living

expenses, and free transportation to the university (Abduljawad et al., 2008).

Preschool teachers who have a degree in ECE have been found to be more knowledgeable, more sensitive, and more involved with children than those without a degree (Hadeed & Sylva, 1995). Gahwaji (2013) explains that the preschool teacher should have a genuine desire to work with young children; the ability to establish a positive social relationship with children and adults (colleagues, parents, officials); balanced emotions and good health; absence of physical defects that would inhibit movements; good morals to serve as role models for the children; good language and correct pronunciation; and intelligence and intellectual flexibility.

The Gulf Girl Association and King Saud University programs set a solid standard for Saudi ECE; today, many other colleges and universities offer excellent training for early childhood educators. Teachers in all Saudi teacher training schools learn positive attitudes about working with children as well as the theory and information regarding childhood and preschool learning experiences,

Challenges in Modern Preschool Education

While Saudi preschool progress has advanced significantly over the last 40 years, the Kingdom's preschool development is still less than what many other modern nations have achieved. Saudi early childhood educational institutions suffer from several difficulties, according to Abduljawad et al. (2008). Very few preschools can be found in rural areas. Many farming communities have no preschool options at all (Al-Otaibi, 1997) as most of the preschools are located in large urban areas (Alhamed et al., 2007).

While some schools provide nutritional lunches, many preschools lack the funds to prepare lunches that meet a preschooler's dietary needs. Many preschools also have insufficient buildings (Abdel-Aal, Ahmed, & Alkadhia, 2012). Saudis often repurpose existent facilities, initially built as businesses, to serve as preschools, but often fail to make adjustments to ensure that the buildings are suitable for small children in terms of safety, evacuation exits, and bathroom design. Alnashef (2003) explains that most curriculums advocate that children spend no more than four hours a day in preschool; if the circumstances necessitate longer stays, however, an organized daily program must allow for sufficient periods of freedom, rest, and complete nutrition in a satisfactory facility.

The multiple supervising agencies, and the presence of public and private preschools,

present a complicated educational picture. Poor coordination between these agencies causes duplication of programs and lack of clarity in laws and regulations that define the roles for each entity. Some preschools employ supervisors who have minimal administrative education themselves and lack skills, experience, and educational leadership (Abduljawad et al., 2008). Many preschool supervisors operate the preschool as a business, managing it like a private corporation rather than an educational institution. Since the creation of ECE programs through the Gulf Girl Association and King Saud University and other teacher education institutions, the level of well-educated preschool teachers has risen significantly. Yet some preschools continue to hire teachers who do not have an early childhood degree (Abduljawad et al., 2008).

Economic problems also affect the preschool system; some private preschools charge very high tuition, often because of inexperience with school finances (Abduljawad et al., 2008). Overall, preschool education receives minimal financial support in Saudi Arabia, and a lack of present financial resources or financial ability to expand in the future is hindering Saudi ECE in general.

The timing of preschool schedules is also a difficulty for Saudi families. Saudi preschools offer education until 1:00 p.m. only, with no after-care available. Parents, especially in the largest cities, often must transport children to preschool before going to work. Since women cannot drive in Saudi Arabia, it is not an option for non-working mothers or nannies to take care of transportation. The 1:00 p.m. closing time requires fathers or working mothers with drivers to leave their jobs in order to pick up the children and take them home to stay the afternoon with a nanny before returning to work. However, most employers do not offer the flexibility for this midday work interruption. Most of the preschools do not offer transportation. When transportation is provided, safety and supervision concerns are serious problems.

Some Saudi parents are unconvinced about the value of a preschool education. Saudi preschool is still optional. High-quality, private preschool can be expensive, and many young Saudi parents are both working and have moved away from the traditions of living with extended family to live on their own (Abduljawad et al., 2008). Often, these Saudi families leave their preschool-age children with an unprepared nanny instead of investing in qualified preschool education. Abdel-Aal et al. (2012) stress the need to enroll children in preschool during times when both parents are busy at work.

The Future of Saudi ECE

Research about the advancement of Saudi ECE in a manner that fits with the realities of the Arab and Islamic world (Al-Mogbel, 2014) must be advocated and supported by the Saudi Ministry of Education. It is vital that Saudi Arabia adopt proven ideas from early childhood research, but the concepts cannot be applied without consideration of the Islamic-based culture, the differences in Middle Eastern life, and the particular needs of Saudi Arabia (Al-Otaibi, 1997). In a position paper on developmentally appropriate practice, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (2009) defines culture as “the customary beliefs and patterns of behavior, both explicit and implicit, that are inculcated by the society—or by a social, religious, or ethnic group within the society—in its members” (p. 13). Saudi ECE must value comparative international education while aligning with the cultural values of its own society (Al-Otaibi, 1997). Culturally responsive early childhood education is an important consideration for the future development of the Saudi preschool system (Hyun, 1998; Hyun et al., 2000).

The increase in the number of Saudi women working outside the home presents a greater need for preschools (Hamdan, 2005). Urbanization and apartment living have reduced the chances for children’s active play (Al-Otaibi, 1997). Preschools can provide this opportunity for Saudi children. Government funds need to be designated to ensure appropriate buildings are prepared for preschools, conducive to this learning phase, and are outfitted with equipment, toys, and educational tools. Also, preschool teachers will need increased emotional and financial support.

Many Saudi preschools need more highly qualified teachers and supervisors. Presently, there is a “shortage of well-trained and qualified teachers in many countries, including those of the Arab world” (Amr, 2011, p. 401). Zamzami’s (1989) thesis on the preparation of preschool teachers recommends cooperation of the individuals and organizations involved in Saudi preschools with teacher educators. Colleges that are preparing teachers for Saudi preschools cannot operate alone; they must engage specialists to consider the preschool needs and the culture of Saudi Arabia as they design early childhood teacher education programs. Gahwaji (2013) notes that “despite having research that shows a positive relationship between high qualifications and effective teaching strategies, no commitment has been made to give teachers especially in private preschool centers the

financial support they need” (p. 338). Financial support of preschool teacher preparation is essential for continued development of Saudi ECE.

Implications

Saudi ECE educators can benefit from international exposure of their career development, as they recognize their need to enhance their professionalism and work to strengthen their country’s education of young children. The Saudi Ministry of Education can be pleased with their progress in ECE and commit to even greater development for its ECE teachers and the overall program. The profit for multiple parties from this Saudi Arabian ECE overview is significant, and the resulting commitment from all parties can further enhance the future of Saudi ECE.

The emphasis on education development and its curriculum must not be limited to the state alone, but rather, it must be a shared responsibility that includes all stakeholders—the students, families, society, private sector and civil institutions—that are affected by the outcomes and outputs of the education system. (Al-Mogbel, 2014, p. 2072)

Additionally, the global ECE community can enhance the value of comparative education by learning more about ECE in the Middle East.

Those concerned with ECE in Saudi Arabia hope for progress in their own system and for other cultures to be informed and aware of the history, present development, and future development of the Saudi preschool system. Saudi Arabian education must continue to find its place in the international ECE community and increase its participation in comparative international education. If the hope of the future is to be found in the success of a nation’s children, then the development of those youngest children and the sharing of that progress with the larger ECE field offers promise and encouragement for all.

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